

CALQUE OR SEMANTIC PARALLEL, WHICH?

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EVERY LANGUAGE has its share of calques, also known as loanshifts or loan-translations, i.e., words, compounds and phrases whose meanings, or extended semantic range, were adapted from another language. This is especially true for modern Hebrew. Confronted as it was with the urgent demand to satisfy the pressing lexical needs of a growing modern Israeli society, it was compelled to resort to this method of increasing its vocabulary and enlarging the limited semantic ranges of its existing lexemes. Thus, countless new words made their way into the language, e.g., *sēpān* for "gladiolus," *qarnap* for "rhinoceros," and the semantic ranges of many biblical words were expanded, e.g., *ḥāšmal* ("amber") came to mean "electricity," since the latter derives from the Greek *elektron*, meaning "amber"; *nešep* ("evening") was made to do duty for the French *soirée* ("an evening affair").

This process, however, did not originate with modern Hebrew, as it is indeed coextensive with the growth of the language since its inception. It especially accelerated during the Greco-Roman period when Hebrew was infused with a flood of Greco-Roman calques, as described by Bendauid (1967, pp. 135–152). While it is easy to identify nearly all calques that entered modern Hebrew, since these were introduced in the full light of day, such is not the case, however, with those that entered the language in the more distant past. We cannot always determine with certainty whether a certain extended meaning of a Hebrew lexeme that has its

analogue in Greek or Latin is to be considered a calque or should be treated, instead, as an independent semantic development. For, as pointed out by Barr (1961, p. 118), languages as different from one another as the Semitic and Indo-European contain many similar semantic extensions and transitions. Here are two of his examples: The Hebrew *hāṭā* and the Greek *hamartano* alike mean "to miss a mark" and "to sin"; the Hebrew *rūāḥ* and the Greek *pneuma* alike mean "wind" and "spirit."

In the lines that follow we shall analyze three Hebrew lexemes, each of whose extended semantic range has an analogue in Greek or Latin, for the purpose of determining the provenance of each of these semantic developments.

1. *šāve*

Lieberman (1942, p. 177) states that *šāve*, used for "immediately," "translates the Greek *eutheos*, at once, immediately," implying that it is a calque, since he incorporates this conclusion in his book *Greek in Jewish Palestine*.¹ This assumption, however, is unwarranted, for it can be shown that the semantic transition from spatial straightness to temporal immediacy is native to Hebrew, as it is present in a cognate biblical lexeme.

Fuenn in his thesaurus (1887, II, p. 400) notes that in the Bible *kēn* is used adverbially with the meaning of "immediately." To the verses cited by him, and subsequently by Yalon (1971, p. 203), others may be added, one of which deserves mention as this meaning will help resolve an old *crux interpretum*: *kēn šadāqā ləḥayyim ūməraddēp rā'ā ləmôîô* (Prov 11:19). Without resorting to emendations, as many do, the first stich is generally rendered as "steadfast righteousness leads to life" (see McKane, 1970, p. 435). While such an interpretation is lexically tenable, it is exegetically wanting because "steadfast" is a poor parallel of *məraddēp* ("pursues") in the second stich. It is better rendered, in accordance with the meaning "immediately" for *kēn*, as: "prompt righteousness leads to life." This yields not only the meaningful thought that promptness constitutes a vital dimension in the performance of a good

1. To the sources cited by Lieberman should be added the expression *bēt dîn šāve* (P. *Qiddushin* 3:4, and parallel), which should be accordingly rendered "a prompt (i.e., a quick and ready) court," and not "a unanimous court" as rendered by the commentaries *ad loc.*

deed, but also results in its being a fitting parallel of the antithetic stich "he who pursues evil it is to his death," since now both refer to quick and ready action, the first for good deeds and the second for evil ones.

The rabbis were apparently aware of this usage, as is reflected in their comment on the phrase *kēn dibbartā* (Exod 10:29), which they explicate to mean: "You have spoken appropriately, and you have spoken in time" (*Mekhilta*, Exod 12:31). While the first meaning, "appropriately," that they attach to *kēn* needs no attestation, the second one, "in time," calls for clarification as to its semantic connection with *kēn*. Evidently, "in time," i.e., soon enough, is but an extension of "immediately," which is one of the attested senses of this lexeme.

kēn is so used in Aramaic as well, as noted by Yalon (1971, p. 202) in his comments on *The Genesis Apocryphon*. What needs to be added is that apparently it is also so used in Targum J. to Nah 1:6.

It is also employed in the sense of "now" in Neh 2:16, as already noted by the early medieval grammarian Judah Ibn Balaam, as cited by Yalon (1971, p. 206) in the name of S. Abramson. This meaning is akin to that of "immediately" as can be seen from '*attā*' ("now") used at times in the Bible for "immediately" (see Koehler-Baumgartner, 1958, p. 747). It is similarly employed in the Mishnah (*Pesaḥim* 10:4), according to the variant reading *vəkēn*, which the commentaries wrongly explain to mean "by right" (see Kashner, 1967, p. 112), whereas it should be rendered "and now" or "and right now" as militated by the context. In all likelihood, the postbiblical *kān* ("here") generally spelled, in Palestinian Hebrew sources, without the '*alep*' as a *mater lectionis*, is a paronym of the biblical *kēn* ("immediately") as words for space and time are often interchangeable, as can be seen, for example, from its English equivalent "here" that is used for both spatial and temporal situations. This is also evidenced in '*ōlām*', which in biblical Hebrew denotes only "a long duration of time" or "infinite time," and came to denote, in postbiblical Hebrew, also "a large expanse of space," i.e., the world, as noted by Ibn Ezra in his commentary on Eccl 3:11.

Interestingly enough, *nākōn*, the *nip'al* participle of *kvn*—the same root of which *kēn* is the *qal* participle—is apparently equally employed with the meaning of "immediately" in the verse *vəšaḥtem 'ēlay 'el nākōn vəhālaqtī 'ittəkem* (1 Sam 23:23). No meaning for the adverbial phrase '*el nākōn*' suits the context as does "immediately," or a synonym thereof such as, for example, "directly" or "promptly." In the previous verse Saul is troubled by the fact that David, whom he is chasing, does not hide

in any one place for too long, which makes his capture difficult. Thus in the verse under discussion, where Saul is charging the Ziphites to spy out David's hiding places and report back to him, it makes good sense that, by the adverbial phrase *'el nākôn*, Saul is stressing promptness in reporting, for speed is of the essence in capturing a fast-moving fugitive such as David.²

True, the identical adverbial phrase is found in 1 Sam 26:4, where it means "truly," or the like, but these two significations—"immediately" and "truly"—are indeed compatible. Both contain the element of straightness and may thus be derived from *kvn*, whose essential meaning is "to be straight" (see Koehler-Baumgartner, 1958, p. 426). That straightness and truth are synonymous may be seen from the Aramaic root *qšf* (see Jastrow, 1903, p. 1429), and that straightness and immediacy are semantically related is clearly evident from the English *plumb* and the German *gleich*.

The semantic nexus between straightness and immediacy is also present in the Hebrew adverb *kēvān*, yet another derivative of the *kvn* stem. In the tannaitic sources it is used with the meaning of "immediately" or "instantly" (e.g., Mishnah, *Tamid*, 3:6) and so in Aramaic (Yalon, 1971, p. 203; Lieberman, 1968, p. 76). It is still similarly used in literary Hebrew in the adverbial phrase *kēvān še . . .* ("as soon as"), but it is often misconstrued even by a literate reader, who tends to confuse its meaning with that of "since," which it has at times.

The tannaitic *kēvān* is thus the semantic parallel of the biblical *kēn*, if not its derivative by having been patterned after it. Indeed, *kēvān* is used in the Targum (Gen 42:11, 19, 31) to render the Hebrew *kēn* ("honest" or "upright"), and so (Deut 13:15) for *nākôn* ("certain"). Similarly, *kēvāntā* is used in the Targum (Ps 5:10; Job 42:7, 8) to render the Hebrew substantive *nākōnā* ("truth").³

The semantic nexus between straightness and immediacy undoubtedly underlies the following two Midrashic interpretations. The verse: *piq-*

2. This signification of *nākôn* probably underlies the midrashic interpretation of *zar'ām nākôn lipnēhem* (Job 21:8) to refer to the generation of the Flood, when giving birth followed closely on the heels of conception (*Bereshit Rabba* 36:1, and parallel). True, the rabbis there offer certain prooftexts, but these are cited not to prove that *nākôn* means proximity in time, but merely for the purpose of determining the exact proximity that *nākôn* represents in this connection.

3. Ben Hayyim's (1970, p. 430, note 7) cautious conjecture that *kēvān* ("immediately") is a phonetic variant of the biblical *kayyôm* (Gen 25:31) cannot be seriously entertained in view of the use of *kēn* and *šave* for "immediately."

qudê hasšēm yašārīm (Ps 19:9) is interpreted by the rabbis to mean that God's precepts "are not distant from us" (*Mishnat R. Eliezer*, p. 248). *yašārīm* is thus taken as "near at hand." Commenting on the verse: *bəšālôm ūbāmīšôr hālak 'ittī* (Mal 2:6), the rabbis state: "he did not delay fulfilling my words" (*Midrash Haggadol*, Lev 10:4). Here *bāmīšôr* is taken to mean "without delay, promptly," again attesting to the intimate connection between straightness and immediacy.

It is thus safe to conclude that the extended meaning of "immediately" for *šave* need not be treated as a calque of the Greek *eutheos*. Since the semantic transition from straightness to immediacy is attested in biblical Hebrew, where there is no semantic infusion from the Greek, this use is to be viewed as an independent semantic development.

2. *'āmad*

In Talmudic and Midrashic Hebrew this verb is used with the meaning "to cost, to be worth" (e.g., *P. Sheqalim*, 4:3; *Vayyiqra Rabba*, 2:1. Cf. Lieberman, 1962, p. 682). This usage brings immediately to mind the English *to cost* and the French *coûter*, both deriving from the Latin *constare*, meaning "to stand with; to consist; to be reckoned in; to cost" (see *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1968, s.v.). Interestingly enough, the very verb *to stand* is still used in English with the meaning "to cost." There is thus *prima facie* ground to suspect that this extended meaning of *'āmad* may be a calque of the Latin *constare*. To resolve this suspicion a close examination of the semantics of this Hebrew lexeme is necessary.

This lexeme has basically three allied meanings: "to stand," "to stand up," "to rise" (see Jastrow, 1903, p. 1086). The last one will help clarify the enigmatic sobriquet *nēr hā'ōmēd* accorded to R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai (*Abot Derabbi Natan*, ed. Schechter, p. 79, note 6).⁴ It should be rendered: "a rising candle," i.e., burning and shining. The semantic nexus between rising and shining is attested in the stem *qym*, the semantic equivalent of

4. Schechter's hasty dismissal of this reading as erroneous, in favor of *nēr hā'ōlām*, is ill-advised since this reading is also found in *Yalqut Makhiri* on Ps 22:21. In fact, the epithet *nēr hā'ōlām* is ill-suited for R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, who is celebrated primarily for his contribution to the preservation of Judaism, and hence the epithet *nēr yisrā'ēl*, as found in the Talmud (*Berakhot*, 28b), would be more fitting. Evidently, *nēr hā'ōlām* is a scribal correction by a copyist who was baffled by the reading *nēr hā'ōmēd* before him. In this connection reference should be made to the attribute "the burning and shining candle" conferred upon John the Baptist (John 5:35), which coincides with the reading *nēr hā'ōmēd*.

'*md*, as can be seen in Job 11:17; 25:3, which Seidel (1932, p. 41) correctly interprets to have the meaning of "shining." Yalon (1937, p. 24, note 9) finds this use of *qvm* in Midrashic Hebrew as well, to which should be added *Bereshit Rabba*, 6:3, where *qayyām* is changed, in a parallel source (*Pesiḳta Derav Kahana*, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 104), to *mabḥîq* ("shines"). It is worth noting that it is so used in Aramaic. The phrase '*ad yômā qā'ēm* (P. *Berakhot*, 4:7; Targum J., 2 Sam 3:35; *Peshiṭta*, Gen 29:7) is to be rendered "while the sun is still shining," bearing in mind that in Midrashic Hebrew *yôm* is used for "sun" (e.g., *Bereshit Rabba*, 6:6; 19:8). Similarly, the paradoxical Talmudic aphorism *hēvē qābal vāqayyām* (*Sanhedrin*, 14a) should be rendered "Be in the dark and you will shine," i.e., stay low and you will be elevated.⁵

The signification of rising which '*amad* has will explain an otherwise puzzling Midrashic comment. On the verse *vayyissōb vayya'āmōd* in 2 Sam 18:30, it is stated: "If he was a *doux*, he was made an *eparchos*," i.e., he was raised in rank (*Pesiḳta Derav Kahana*, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 438). Evidently, the rabbis interpret *vayyissōb* to mean that his title was changed, as this verb is elsewhere associated with the changing of a name (e.g., 2 Kings 23:24), and the verb *vayya'āmōd* is taken on its own strength to mean that he rose in rank.

Bearing this in mind, it follows that the meaning "to be worth" or "to cost" for '*amad* is an extension of the meaning "to rise" rather than that of "to stand." For the concept of worth is associated in Hebrew with that of rising, as can be seen from the verb '*ālā*, which is still so employed in modern Hebrew, and from its noun '*illūy*, used in the sense of "value" (e.g., Mishnah, *Temura*, 7:3). This semantic transition is also attested in

5. The meaning "to praise" contained in the stem *qvm*, as shown by Wartsky (1970, pp. 136–138), is undoubtedly a derivative of the meaning "to shine" that the stem has. The semantic shift from "shining" to "praising" is attested in the stem *bhr*, the *šap'el* of which is used in Aramaic with the double meaning: "to brighten" as well as "to glorify" (see Jastrow, 1903, p. 1510). Hence the biblical *hll*, meaning "to shine" as well as "to praise" is not to be treated, as in many lexica, as belonging to two distinct homonymous stems, but as belonging to the selfsame stem.

To the sources cited by Wartsky for the use of '*md* with the meaning "to praise" should be added the enigmatic Midrashic comment on the word *bā'omdām* (Ezek 1:24, 25), according to which it means; "when the Jews stand, and praise God" (*Tanḥuma*, ed. Buber, 11, p. 61). This interpretation, variously formulated in parallel Midrashic passages, suffered from confusing interpolations because the interpolators were unaware of the meaning "to praise" that this lexeme has. In the passage just quoted the words "stand, and" (*ōmādīm ū . . .*) are an unnecessary addition to the text, which makes excellent sense without their intrusion.

the Arabic *qām*, which means "to stand up; to rise; to cost; to be worth" (see Wehr, 1966, p. 798).

A similar semantic transition is present in the meaning of "estimating" or "appraising" that the verb *'āmad* has, the etymology of which is not well established. Kutscher (1939, pp. 295–299) derives it from the Akkadian, but its semantics still need to be explained. In the Palestinian Talmud (e.g., *Nazir*, 9:5), as well as in early manuscripts of the Mishnah (see Epstein, 1948, p. 1227), it is spelled with an *'ayin*, not with an *'alep*. It is worth noting, in this connection, that Ibn Janah (1896, p. 375) interprets *'emdātō* (Mic 1:11) in accordance with this meaning. Such being the case, it is reasonable to assume that the meaning of "estimating" or "appraising" is merely an extension of the meaning "to be worth," which *'āmad* has. This semantic development is also reflected in the equivalent lexeme *'ālā*, which is used in the *hip'il* with the meaning of "appraising" as, for example, in the Talmudic phrase *ma'ālīm 'ōtō bē-dāmīm* (Baba Batra 13b), which means "it is appraised in money."

From all the foregoing it becomes clear that while the meanings "to cost, to be reckoned in" of the Latin *constare* developed from the concept of "consisting," the meanings "to cost, to be worth, to appraise" of the Hebrew *'āmad* developed from the concept of "rising." Hence the semantic development of *'āmad* is to be considered neither as a calque nor as a semantic parallel of the Latin *constare*. The two, having followed different semantic paths, are to be treated as a case of mere surface or external parallels.

3. *rāšē dāḇārīm*

This phrase is of tannaitic provenance (*Mekhilta*, Exod 19:3), and not as Ben Yehuda (1959, p. 6323) erroneously records it—as being of medieval vintage. It is, contextually, the semantic equivalent of the Greek *kephalaia logon*, i.e., the main point, the gist of the matter (see Liddell and Scott, 1940, p. 944). Before broaching, however, the question as to whether the Hebrew phrase is a loan-translation or not, we must first determine its exact signification.

Basing oneself on the fact that *rōš* is frequently used in the Bible with the meaning of "sum" (e.g., Exod 30:12), one might be tempted to define *rāšē dāḇārīm* as summations or generalizations of certain matters. Accordingly, the phrase, in the singular, would become the equivalent of the

term *kālāl*, as indeed Qimḥi in his commentary on Ps 139:17 indicates, in rendering *rāšēhem* by *kālālēhem*. But such a construction is contraindicated by the phrase *diqdūqē dāḥārīm* that is used as a contrast of the phrase under discussion (*Shemot Rabba*, 28:2). As a rule, the antonym of *kālāl* is *pārāt*, and that of *diqdūq* is *gūp* (see *Sifre*, Deut 1:3). Since the contrasting phrase of *rāšē dāḥārīm* is not *pārātīm* but *diqdūqē dāḥārīm* it becomes self-evident that *rāšē dāḥārīm* is the equivalent of *gūpīm*, the meaning of which is "essential elements" (see Mishnah, *Ḥagiga*, 1:8; Tosefta, *Shabbat* 2:10). This phrase is also found, apparently with the meaning of "essential elements," in the epistle of R. Sherira Gaon (ed. Lewin, 1921, p. 58).

Having thus established that *rāšē dāḥārīm* is indeed the semantic equivalent of the Greek *kephalaia logon*, the question of its provenance must now be considered. In Ps 119:160 there appears the enigmatic phrase *rōš dāḥārāḳā*, which has been variously rendered. In the Anchor Bible it is rendered by Dahood as "the essence of your word." Similarly, the phrase *rēš millīn* (Dan 7:1) is subject to many interpretations, one of which is "the essential contents" (see Koehler-Baumgartner, 1958, p. 1121).

If these interpretations are correct, then there is obviously no reason for considering the tannaitic phrase under discussion as a possible loan-translation. Since, however, we have no record how these biblical phrases were construed by the Tannaim, their serving as the biblical provenance for *rāšē dāḥārīm*, tempting as it may be, can only be a matter of speculation. Be that as it may, considering the fact that *rēšīt* is used attributively in the Bible for "the choicest" (e.g., Num 18:12), the transition from this meaning to that of "the main" or "the essential" is easily conceived. Hence viewing *rāšē dāḥārīm* as an inner semantic development must be treated as a distinct likelihood.

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